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MIDDLE EAST – AFRICA – SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

CONTENTS

103600 GAO
121000

- 001: Angola: Little Progress in Preparing for
>Elections. (BY. 7MPLA, 7FNL AND 7UNITA . . . ①) PG
IN >TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT) (C)(N)F
- 002: Pakistan-Afghanistan: War of Words. (3) 132000 BPK BAF
(>DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, >BORDER ISSUE) (C)(N)F ANNEX
- 003: The Arabs: Looking Beyond the July
"Flashpoint". (4) 132000 DEG DSY-
(EGYPT AND SYRIA WEIGH ECONOMIC, POLITICAL
AND MILITARY FACTORS, EXPIRATION OF
7UNDOD) (N)F

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Angola

Little Progress in Preparing for Elections

The three liberation groups that share power in Angola's transitional government have made little progress in preparing for the national elections scheduled to be held before the end of October in accordance with the independence agreement between the groups and the Portuguese. There is still time for the groups to catch up on their work, but unless they begin to show more movement, elections could be postponed indefinitely.

In order to meet the requirements for elections, a central commission, composed of representatives of the three liberation groups, is meeting daily to draft a national fundamental law which will serve as an interim constitution. All three groups have their own drafts of the law, however, and they are not likely to reach agreement in the near future. According to the US consul in Luanda, one of the major points of disagreement is nationalization of foreign-owned properties. The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola is pushing for a provision that will allow expropriation without compensation of properties belonging to "enemies of the state." Such a law would amount to a license to steal, and the National Front for the Liberation of Angola and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola are opposed.

The central commission must also draft an electoral law which will provide for popular election of a constituent assembly and selection of a president, but here too it may run into trouble. Major sticking points are likely to be citizenship and suffrage. The National Front would like to get several hundred thousand refugees in Zaire on the rolls, but the Popular Movement will probably seek to keep them off through restrictions on absentee balloting or stiff residency requirements.

(Continued)

1

Apr 17, 1975

CONFIDENTIAL

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CONFIDENTIAL

The independence agreement does not provide for a postponement of elections, and all three groups are publicly claiming they want elections to be held. They are signing up supporters, but their activities are hampered by lack of funds and equipment. The US consul suspects that the Popular Movement, which is probably having the most difficult time setting up its campaign, would like to see the elections postponed or a formula accepted whereby delegates to the constituent assembly would be appointed by the groups rather than popularly elected. The Popular Movement would like to discuss these issues at a summit meeting of the three groups, but so far it has had no response from its two rivals.

A protracted deadlock in selecting the country's leadership increases the chances that one of the groups, or an alliance of two of them, might attempt to seize power by force. Such an action could result in either a relatively quick coup d'etat or a prolonged civil war. (CONFIDENTIAL)

25X1A



Apr 17, 1975

2

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Pakistan-Afghanistan

War of Words

Afghan-Pakistani exchanges of unfriendly propaganda have grown increasingly shrill and vituperative in recent weeks. Although neither side apparently wants the situation to reach the point of actual hostilities, a miscalculation or overreaction is always possible.

Relations have been poor since mid-1973, when Mohammad Daoud, a former Afghan prime minister, regained power in Kabul and revived a longstanding border dispute with Pakistan. The hostile rhetoric began to grow even more intense two months ago after Islamabad accused the Afghans of complicity in the murder of Prime Minister Bhutto's chief political lieutenant in a Pakistani province in the disputed border area.

Daoud has been counselled in the past by the Soviets and the Indians to avoid open conflict with Pakistan, which is militarily much stronger than Afghanistan. He will probably receive similar advice from another influential neighbor, the Shah of Iran, when he visits Tehran at the end of this month. Bhutto, for his part, knows hostilities with Afghanistan could interrupt his consolidation of power at home.

Despite the interest of both Afghanistan and Pakistan in avoiding major trouble, there is a danger that heightened emotions on both sides could lead to further problems. In the early 1960s, during Daoud's earlier tenure as Afghanistan's leader, friction over the border issue led to a closing of the Pakistani-Afghan frontier and for a time threatened to degenerate into outright hostilities. (CONFIDENTIAL)

25X1A



3

Apr 17, 1975

CONFIDENTIAL

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ANNEX

The Arabs: *Looking Beyond the
July "Flashpoint"*

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The following essay, which generally reflects the views of Middle East-Africa Division analysts, is offered as a reminder that Egypt and Syria will be weighing a number of political, economic, and military factors that might militate against their resuming hostilities around the time of the expiry of the UN observer forces mandate in Sinai in late July.

The Arab initiative in launching the October 1973 war has cast a long shadow not only over the Arab-Israeli confrontation, but also over the perception of Arab motivations by US intelligence analysts. In particular, our perception of subsequent traumas, such as the Syrian maneuvering over the renewal of the UNDOF mandate in November 1974 and the recent suspension of step-by-step diplomacy, has been clouded by a central, basic assumption: That Egypt and Syria--in the absence of progress in negotiations--will again decide that only renewed military action can pressure Israel to make significant further withdrawals from the occupied territories. Most recently, the intelligence community generally has concluded that unless there is diplomatic progress by mid-summer 1975, Egypt and Syria will either initiate some form of military action against Israel or indulge themselves in some form of military posturing sufficient to precipitate an Israeli pre-emptive strike against one or both of them. Granting the volatility of the current situation and the admittedly high potential for irrationality to prevail, this essay points out that there are certain other factors in the political/military equation that suggest that Arab-initiated military action is not necessarily inevitable by mid-summer even in the absence of significant diplomatic progress.

(Continued)

Apr 17, 1975

4

CONFIDENTIAL

Initially, there is another way of looking at the suspension of indirect Egyptian-Israeli negotiations in calculating the shorter term prospect for a war initiated by the Arabs. The very collapse of the latest negotiations has served some of President Sadat's purposes by calling world attention to the reasonableness of the Arab cause, by pointing up the dangers of another war, and finally, by heightening US concern for finding a diplomatic alternative to renewed conflict. Sadat, indeed, has managed adroitly to turn the setback of step-by-step diplomacy into a political gain by securing a position that might loosely be called "moral ascendancy" over the Israelis in the propaganda context. In any case, the US and other outside parties are running scared that the situation may come dangerously unstuck and this in itself adds to the diplomatic-political capital stock of Sadat, who professes to believe in striving for "limited objectives."

More importantly, and with longer range implications, any notion that both Egypt and Syria may impatiently conclude that renewed military action will achieve their political aims posits the questionable assumptions that both Sadat and Syrian President Asad will conclude that Israel will be forced, by war, to be more conciliatory and that the US will be willing to pressure Israel into making more concessions than Washington did after the October War. Admittedly, Arab perceptions of the potential benefits of war could outweigh the negative factors apparent to Western observers, and it is certainly possible that Egypt and Syria might conclude that a renewed war would finally lead the superpowers toward imposing a settlement on the Middle East that will satisfy Arab demands. But it seems equally possible that Sadat and, perhaps more grudgingly, Asad may recognize that renewed conflict in the absence of a basic change in US attitudes (e.g. a willingness to sharply delimit its military aid to Israel) not only risks making the Israelis even more "intransigent" but also risks the destruction of the Arab armed forces, and the loss of the Arab territorial and political gains achieved since October 1973. Although Syria has achieved less than Egypt and both may be impatient in general terms, the Syrians and the Egyptians may equally perceive that renewed warfare is

Apr 17, 1975

(Continued)

CONFIDENTIAL

5

CONFIDENTIAL

a gamble for which the political pay-off is by no means clear.

Both Sadat and Asad, although from somewhat different perspectives, acknowledge that the US holds the key to persuading the Israelis to unlock ultimately their hold on the occupied territories. Therefore, so long as the US appears to be continuing to attempt to gain something for the Arabs by diplomatic means, the Arabs might be willing to play out their political-diplomatic string for a much longer period than we have been generally willing to assume.

It is also widely believed that Sadat's room for maneuver may be increasingly circumscribed by pressure from the Syrians and the Palestinians, both of whom have had less than complete faith that either Sadat or the US will be able or willing to satisfy their demands by diplomacy. Briefly, however, neither Syria nor the Palestinians are likely to force hostilities on their own or together without Egyptian concurrence; although the political constraints that either Syria or the Palestinians can impose on the Egyptians are real, it is possible to seriously overrate the military implications of these constraints in the absence of an Egyptian decision that there is absolutely no prospect of pursuing a solution short of renewing hostilities.

In any case, Egypt and Syria run various risks in renewing hostilities which may not stay their hand for long but, at least, for quite possibly longer than mid-summer 1975. If they initiate offensive action to achieve a break in the political stalemate, e.g., they risk heightening Israeli "intransigence" and a sharp defeat by Israel that could cost them the territorial gains they have already achieved in Sinai and on the Golan. Some form of war of attrition may not occasion further Arab territorial losses, but it also risks making Israel less conciliatory and reduces the chances

(Continued)

Apr 17, 1975

6

CONFIDENTIAL

that Tel Aviv could be persuaded to accept US assurances that it could guarantee an eventual, viable peaceful settlement. Finally, if the Arabs attempt to bleed Israel in some form of repeated warfare, the Arabs risk forcing the US into the black and white dilemma of supporting Israel's "survival" or letting the Israelis go down the drain. Thus far, the more moderate Arabs do not appear to believe either that the US is ready to abandon Israel in extremis or that any amount of world pressure would force the US into such a course.

Without further elaboration, it would seem useful in our approach to the next "flashpoint" that we not lose sight of the following factors which may make the summer of '75 different than the autumn of '73 in the calculations of the Arab principals:

--The various implications of the continuing US commitment to seek a diplomatic settlement and to preserve its improved position in the Arab world.

--The prospect that renewed war would not result in significant political gains for the Arabs, and indeed, would risk the loss of both political and territorial gains they have made to date.

--The persistence of serious divisions within the Arab ranks that, at least, serve to mitigate the political-diplomatic constraints Syria or the Palestinians can impose on Egypt.

--The Egyptians', and perhaps to a lesser extent, the Syrians' desires to get on with capital acquisition and economic development.

--The recognition by President Sadat, at least, that he still has some considerable propaganda and political capital to expend.

Much of the foregoing is also based on assumptions open to broad challenge but it is offered in the belief that we should not, and cannot afford to, remain under the shadow of October 1973 in our assessments of the difficult period ahead. (CONFIDENTIAL)

25X1A

7

Apr 17, 1975

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